

LESSON 2 Evaluating Sources

Primary Sources

A *primary source* is evidence (often written) given by a person who was part of or present at the event reported. A primary source may also be an object that was a part of the event.

To determine the type of source, ask yourself:

- Were the people doing the reporting part of the event?
- Did they see the event they are reporting on?

If so, it is a primary source.



Label each item below with the appropriate letter.

P The source is a **primary** source.

S The source is a **secondary** source.

- _____ 1. Terry said she saw Dasha buy the sneakers.
- _____ 2. This book, *The United States* by Winthrop Jordan and other historians, published in 1982, states that Giovanni da Verrazano explored the Atlantic Coast of North America for the French in 1524.
- _____ 3. Roger Williams wrote that he had to work very hard when he went to Rhode Island.
- _____ 4. In 1616, Samuel deChamplain described the Canadian Indians he met this way: “Their life is a miserable one in comparison to our own, but they are happy.”
- _____ 5. A newspaper in England stated that farmland in the American colonies was very fertile.
- _____ 6. Reggie said that he read in his history textbook that children in colonial America worked hard.
- _____ 7. James Oglethorpe said that the land where he settled in colonial Georgia was beautiful.
- _____ 8. The 1756 indenture papers (the contract that made him an indentured servant) of Isaiah Thomas show that he worked for a printer.

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Reason to Lie

People have a *reason to lie* when their statements make themselves or their group look good or when they help their own interests (for example, when they make more money). People generally have no reason to lie when they (usually without realizing it) make themselves look bad or their enemy look good.

When questioning the truthfulness of an argument, ask yourself:

- Does the statement make the speaker (or the group) look good?
- Does the statement further or improve the interests of the speaker (or the group)?



Label each item below with the appropriate letter.

R The person has a **reason to lie**.

N The person has **no** reason to lie.

- _____ 9. Bill said he didn't steal the radio.
- _____ 10. The Pilgrims said they would not have survived without the help of friendly Indians, such as Squanto. (Assume that most colonists did not like Indians.)
- _____ 11. Captain John Smith said in 1614 that he generally caught 200-300 cod in one day.
- _____ 12. William Penn said that his colony, Pennsylvania, was the best colony in North America.
- _____ 13. The police found the stolen radio in Emilie's locker. (The evidence is the radio).

Corroboration

Corroboration means finding other evidence that supports evidence you already have. For example, if I claim that Gabriel was a great baseball player, and you find a newspaper article saying that Gabriel was a great baseball player, you have corroborated what I said.



What evidence might you search for to corroborate or verify the evidence in:

14. statement 5 (page 20)?

15. statement 12 (above)?